



# CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155  
Sacramento, California 95814  
<http://calfed.ca.gov>  
Public Information Line 1-800-700-5752

(916) 657-2666  
FAX (916) 654-9780

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CONTACT: Kim Canevari  
(916) 654-7137

## NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

### FARMERS ASKED TO WEIGH IN ON CALIFORNIA WATER DECISIONS

SACRAMENTO -- State and federal officials are seeking the agricultural community's input on three potential solutions to one of the state's most vexing problems -- resolving the environmental and water management conflicts associated with California's Bay-Delta system.

The Bay-Delta is a critically important part of California's natural environment and economy. It supplies drinking water for more than 22 million Californians and irrigates approximately 4.5 million acres of the most fertile and productive farmland on earth, which produces, among other things, 45 percent of the nation's fruits and vegetables. Farming and its related industries provide nearly one out of 10 jobs in California. Ultimately, California's \$24 billion-dollar agricultural economy is at risk if Bay-Delta environmental and water management problems are not resolved.

Today the Bay-Delta is in serious trouble. Years of conflict among the state's water users and the environment, which also needs fresh water, has pushed the system to the brink of failure. Some of the levees that protect local homes, farms and infrastructure are at risk of failure, which could cause disastrous floods, destroy crops, contaminate the water supply and interrupt water deliveries to two-thirds of the state. Some species are listed as endangered and there are general concerns over water quality and water supply reliability.

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#### CALFED Agencies

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##### California

The Resources Agency  
Department of Fish and Game  
Department of Water Resources  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
State Water Resources Control Board

##### Federal

Environmental Protection Agency  
Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Reclamation  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Department of Commerce  
National Marine Fisheries Service

In 1995 Governor Pete Wilson and the Clinton Administration entered into an historic cooperative agreement with the state's leading agricultural, environmental and urban interests to develop a consensus solution to these problems.

"CALFED is a new way of managing our natural resources," says Lester Snow, executive director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. "It recognizes that these complex problems cannot be resolved by a government-only approach any more than they can be solved by addressing only the needs of the environment or only the needs of water users. A lasting, equitable solution must address the needs of all sides equally."

Working with stakeholders, through public meetings, working groups and a 31-member public advisory council, CALFED has developed three draft solutions for the Bay-Delta. They range in cost from \$8 to \$12 billion and would be implemented over a 30-year period. Each contains actions to address ecosystem restoration, water quality, water supply reliability, levee system integrity and watershed management. They differ primarily in how they would move and store water in the system.

"We need more public input on the trade-offs that need to be made with each alternative," says Snow. "Building a new channel to take some of the water around the Delta from the North directly to pumping plants south of the Delta has the greatest benefit to fish, but it is also the most politically challenging. Another potential solution that would make only minor improvements to the way water flows through the Delta would improve the water quality in the Delta itself, but would not significantly improve the system's overall flexibility."

CALFED will seek public input on the three potential solutions this spring when it holds public hearings throughout the state. The 75-day public comment period for the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report will begin March 16 and will end June 1. For more information call 1-800-700-5752.

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#### Attachments

- Public Hearing Schedule
- Alternatives at a Glance
- CALFED Solution Area Map

(Note to Editors: Additional graphics can be obtained by calling 619-452-0031, ext. 300.)

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